

**Bronx Business Tech Center Incubator Report to the City Council
for the period through November - May, 2021**

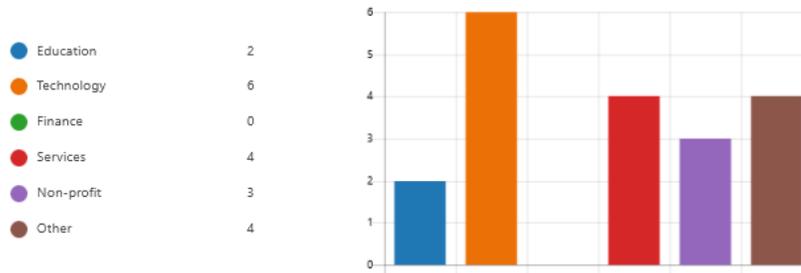
Lehman College School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) is pleased to submit this report on the outcomes of the FY21 Council Funds to Create New Tech Incubators, for December, 2020 through April, 2021.

The Bronx Business Tech Center has supported economic development in the Bronx, in general, and its Incubator clients, in particular, in a variety of innovative ways since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown began in March 2020.

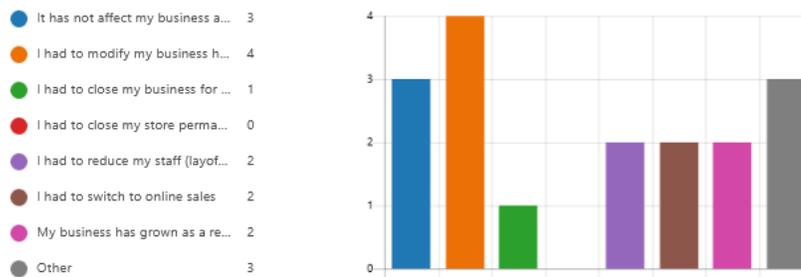
Currently CUNY on the Concourse is open two days per week for limited in-person allied health classes only (Certified Nursing Assistant, medical assistant, pharmacy tech and dental assistant) and CNA testing. As the city re-opens, we anticipate opening at least one other day and totally re-opening as circumstances allow. Incubator clients will be able to use the facilities and take advantage of services as soon as possible. Over 80% incubator clients have expressed the wish to return to COTC.

Bronx Business Tech Center Incubator Clients

3. What type of business is it?



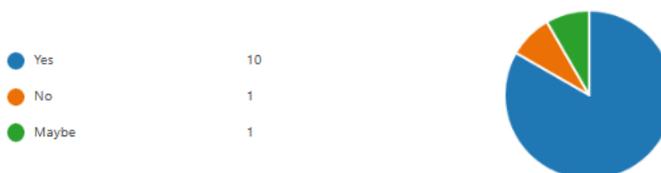
4. How has the pandemic affected your business during the 1st quarter 2021



5. Have you applied to any financial relief programs offered by the Federal or local Government?



9. We are planning to open the incubator in early summer, would you be interested in using the facilities?



The majority of the clients are technology focused, followed by services and education.

Achievements

1. The Tech Center Supported 20 businesses in the Tech Center Incubator.

With the imposition of lockdown on March 13, 2020, the Incubator clients could no longer access the space at CUNY on the Concourse. After that date the businesses were not charged rent, but they continued to receive services remotely: by phone, email or video conference. A detailed updated report regarding the financial health of the businesses and how they were managing is attached (Appendix 1).

Incubator Client Interview Findings

Overall, the Incubator clients are surviving or thriving, using technology more than ever, both to connect to their customers, with each other and with the Bronx Business Tech Incubator. The majority reported varying degrees of success, as a result of dynamic pivoting and in some cases businesses have expanded. In answer to the question “How would you describe your current business situation?” all but three of the businesses reported having to modify in some way including:

We had to pivot to a completely online model.

Will Rampersaud of Ramp Up reports:

Maintaining and thriving. We are paying special attention to the clients that we are currently working with to make sure they are scaling on track.

The tax preparer says that his work is slow because businesses have closed. Other incubator clients report scaling back or slowly expanding. Still others are considering new businesses as The Detailed Press explains:

I'm currently working on a new business plan which both caters to the public & my interests.

Two businesses reported growth as a result of the pandemic, Learn Tech Teach, owned by Khaita Wasiyo, and Ramp Up Media, owned by Wil Rampersaud.

In terms of needs, the incubator clients are mostly concerned about navigating funding sources (loans and grants) and understanding the new financial landscape. The current plethora of possible financing is overwhelming for many small businesses and the Business Tech Incubator staff are working to help them navigate the constantly changing situation. It's indicative of the general situation that 60% of incubator clients have applied for financial assistance but a third decided not to, with others unsure.

A second common need is for ways to market and grow their businesses. In response to these needs the BBTI staff are connecting incubator clients to new training opportunities provided at no cost through grants received by the School of Continuing and Professional Studies from Verizon and New York City's Small Business Services, as well as "Upskilling" grants funded through CUNY Central and the Blackstone Launchpad initiative (See Section xx).

The Incubator continues to provide essential support to non-profits such as the Sherman Creek Conservancy and the Worldwide Veterans and Family Services Program, Inc., a social service agency in Bronx, New York serving the needs of Veterans and their families at

risk of being homeless. Sherman Creek obtained an SBA COVID Emergency Relief Grant and Worldwide Veterans secured an EIDL loan. Both have had to cut back operations but are still functioning.

We are optimistic about the future of the Bronx Business Tech incubator and expect to expand as a result of two forces. The first is the large number of start-ups that were founded in the US in 2020. According to official data 1.5 million new businesses started during the pandemic, up 16% from 2019. As these start-ups mature they will need space and services. Secondly the huge advances in technology propelled by the pandemic lockdown and the need to communicate are changing the way business functions and operates. For example, Zoom increased from 10 million users to 300 million in the space of a year.

Appendix 1: Bronx Business Tech Incubator periodic report survey outcome

No one imagined that the city in general and the City University in particular would be locked down for such a long time and in anticipation of continued caution about in-person events and meetings, the Tech Center provided remote events specifically for the Incubator clients:

a) Exclusive Bronx Business Meet-up

In January 2021, Jane MacKillop, Dean, School of Continuing and Professional Studies, and Clarence Stanley, Regional Director, Small Business Development Center, moderated an exclusive meet-up for the tech incubator businesses, focused on how to establish priorities and make the right business decisions to grow in times of crisis. Businesses shared insights about their COVID

business recovery and pitched their products and services to each other.

The moderators stressed that the business owners should assess how the needs of their most important customers have changed due to COVID and target their digital channels against their competition.

Some businesses were trying to accelerate their shifts toward digital models, e.g., creating fully functioning e-commerce in just one month. Some others had to provide for new safety requirements to make customers feel comfortable.

Appendix 2: Bronx Business Meet-up flyer, event photos, attendee list

- b) Google My Business. – the world’s most effective digital marketing tool for small businesses.

In April 2021, Goher Murtaza, Director Continuing Education, is scheduled to present an exclusive webinar for the tech incubator businesses, focused on why businesses should claim their Google My Business.

The webinar will focus on the topic of Search Engine Optimization for use to increase as a marketing discipline focused on growing visibility in organic (non-paid) search engine results, helping businesses to connect to the people who are searching online for the solutions they offer.

Appendix 3: Google My Business flyer, digital marketing for small business presentation

c) Business restart/recovery series

In March- April 2021, the tech incubator and Lehman's SBDC presented the business restart/recovery series to the incubator clients and the Bronx community.

Part One:

- Basics of Startup Development
- Attracting Your Target Market
- Navigating the Paper Trail
- Goal Setting and the Business Plan

Part Two:

- Branding Your Business
- Using Social Media for Your Business
- Website Essentials
- Government Contracts - M/BWE Certification

Appendix 4: Business restart/ recovery workshop flyer, business restart/ recovery workshop presentation

d) Doing business with MTA

In May 2021, Lehman's SBDC are scheduled to present contracting opportunities, real estate, or marketing partnerships with MTA.

This workshop is hosted by Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and will cover:

- MTA Small Business Development Program
- MTA discretionary purchases
- Leveraging the value of your M/WBE certification
- Increase your business opportunities as an SDVOB
- Marketing your business service/products to the MTA.

Link to the workshop flyer:

<https://www.bronxsdbc.com/workshops/mta>

2. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

The SBDC at Lehman College SCPS continued to collaborate closely with the Tech Center to support the local small businesses, hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. SBDC goal is to support the businesses to stay open, grow, and to get through the difficult times.

The SBDC supported the Tech Center clients with business financing, government contracting, e-commerce/social media, grants and more. Provided free business consulting, information about licensing, permit guidance, and SBA Coronavirus Economic Injury Disaster Loan. <https://bronxsdbc.org>

- For the fiscal year period - October 1, 2020 to – March 31, 2021. the Bronx Center provided one-on-one counseling sessions to 432 clients of which 229 were new clients.
- The Center has assisted clients in obtaining economic impact in the amount of \$4,625,974.00. This investment has created and saved 228 jobs.
- The Center has been focused on COVID-19 activity since March 2020.
- The Center provided counseling services to a diverse, multi-cultural audience. The ethnic segments served included 50% Black, 44% Hispanic, 10% Asian and 15% White. Females accounted for 55% of the clients served. In addition, the Center provided counseling to 4 Veteran clients.
- During the period, the Center hosted 37 virtual training events with 2,294 attendees.

3. The Tech Center continued to provide economic development agency leadership through the Bronx Business Council (BBC).

Bronx Business Council Partner Organizations
BOC, Business Outreach Center Network
Bronx Women's Business Resource Center
BOEDC, Bronx Overall Development Corp.
Bronx Chamber of Commerce
Fordham Road Business Improvement District BID
NYC Business Solutions
SoBro, South Bronx Overall Development Corp.
SoBro, Industrial Development Zone
Hostos Community College
Bronx Community College
Workforce Education Program, Lehman College
School of Continuing and Professional Studies, Lehman College
Small Business Development Center, Lehman College
CUNY on the Concourse Campus, Lehman College

Meetings of the Bronx Business Council were convened on January 12th to share information and good practices and ensure that there are no gaps in services or unnecessary duplication.

Outline notes: Businesses need to learn how to set up their companies online, working with Amazon Shop, Shopify. BBC partners agreed to offer extra free webinars. Businesses need to be in compliance with the rules for COVID, Lehman Collage will collaborate with BOC, Business Outreach Center Network, offering safety training for the small businesses, training will start on May 2021. To incorporate e-commerce, Fordham BID will create a web portal by, providing a landing page for each business.

To assist with marketing, BOC will offer free trainings in English and Spanish, to support business owners with building their own website, the training will include SEO and how to do digital marketing.

Partners have been working closely with businesses in connecting them into procurement opportunities besides the PPP since many businesses with 40+ employees reported to have difficulty with prompt payment.

All partners reported that they have been helping small businesses across the borough with several relief options to help businesses and nonprofits organizations recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

- We continued to serve the community by collecting information about the essential training programs into a single location by means of the BBTI shared web site and the calendar.
<http://lehman.edu/techincubator/index.php> ;
- We continued to send the Tech Center's weekly online newsletter to 6680 Bronx businesses on our mailing list to keep them informed about new funding and training opportunities.

Appendix 5: BBTI newsletter data, BBTI Newsletters November-March 2021

4. The Tech Center provided Technology training for Small Businesses

This new initiative provides local business owners and employees with digital literacy, marketing, and online technology training to remain resilient during the pandemic.

<http://www.lehman.edu/techincubator/training-for-small-business/>

The tech center has laid out an agenda that focuses on accelerating digital investments in response to growing businesses needs, using new data to improve business operations, increasing technology capabilities to overcome pandemic restrictions, and increasing businesses abilities to deliver more effectively.

Training subjects include:

Digital Skills, Communications/Marketing Training

- Computer Basics
- Cloud Storage: Dropbox and Microsoft OneDrive
- Mac Basics
- Zoom Essentials
- Scheduling and Managing Zoom Meetings (for Hosts)
- Communication: Google Meet and Gmail
- Shared Cloud Storage: Google Drive
- Document Creation: Google Docs, Sheets, Slides
- Data Collection, Surveys and Analysis: Google Forms
- Education: Google Classroom
- Introduction to Microsoft Teams
- Microsoft Office 365 Basics
- Microsoft Word 365: Part 1 & Part 2
- Microsoft Excel 365: Part 1 & Part 2
- Microsoft Outlook 365: Part 1 & Part 2

- Microsoft PowerPoint 365
- Microsoft Access- Desktop
- QuickBooks
- Payroll Fundamentals
- Building an Online Presence
- Create Your Own Website
- Finding New Customers Online
- Selling Your Product Online

COVID-19 Safety Training

- Health and hygiene in a pandemic
- COVID safety for food and beverage businesses
- COVID safety for retail

5. Tech Center's Emerging Tech Mentorship Program

Bronx Tech Incubator was uniquely positioned to develop the [emerging technology mentorship program](#). The Council funding allowed SCPS to leverage a one-year grant (\$100,000/year) from the Verizon Foundation to serve over 250 small businesses. The program has served 100 businesses since its launch in October 2020 to date.

Twenty-eight small business owners in the Bronx were the first cohort to complete an emerging technology mentorship program piloted by the tech center.

Under this one-year initiative, the business owners participate in 8 hours of technology training via Zoom. They are then paired with a Verizon volunteer/mentor group for 7 weekly structured - mentorship sessions on topics such as financing, marketing, competitive analysis, social media and website best practices and e-commerce with additional on-call help available by phone, email, and text. Businesses continue meeting with their mentors as needed for 15 additional weeks.

The Tech Incubator has developed the curriculum and is currently offering free training workshops, together with other [CUNY partners](#), in web-based applications for 250 small businesses across the five boroughs. In particular, the program is designed to attract small business owners who are veterans and minority- and women-owned businesses (MWBES).

Lehman's Tech Incubator has completed two cohorts which will expand to four other CUNY schools, overseeing 8 more cohorts by end 2021: The College of Staten Island, Queens College, Manhattan's Baruch College, and the New York City College of Technology in Brooklyn.

Each school has either a Small Business Development Center or a technology incubator. Lehman's tech incubator is the only facility of its kind in both the CUNY system and the Bronx, which made the College uniquely qualified to develop this new technology program.

6. Bronx Business Tech Incubator (Tech Center): Next Steps

Lehman College's School of Continuing and Professional Studies is proud to be able to assist the small businesses in the incubator at this critical time in the history of New York City. The funding from the City Council has been essential in supporting innovative entrepreneurs who are providing services needed by our borough and pushing forward technology innovation within a technologically sophisticated infrastructure. We are looking forward to resuming business on-site as soon as it is safe to do so.

OVERALL IMPACT AND BUDGET (FISCAL 2021)

Programs		Budget
1	Tech Center	\$180,000
2	Support services (e.g., Programs, Webinars, Newsletter, Websites, Counseling)	\$172,500
3	Equipment upgrade and replacement, OTPS	\$30,000
Total		\$382,500

Impact		People
1	Incubator businesses, including webinars, newsletters	1,328
2	Small Business Development Center	2,726
4	Technology training for Small Businesses	30
5	Emerging Tech Mentorship Program	102
		4,186